



The Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO), the Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD), the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the International Organisation for Migration in Iraq (IOM Iraq) hosted the Bridge CRPD-SDGs Module 1 Iraq, in Erbil, from 9 to 16 November 2021.

This Bridge Module 1 involved 83 people, of which there were 23 participants, 10 facilitators and resource people, 34 support people - including sign language interpreters, language interpreters, Braille and sound technicians, illustrators, and personal assistants, as well as 03 logistic support and 13 observers.

The 23 participants were selected from 12 Governorates across Iraq and represented a very diverse field of experiences. The Bridge Quality Criteria ensured that 52% of participants were from underrepresented groups, including people with intellectual disabilities, Deaf people, people with psychosocial disabilities, autistic people, Yazidis with disabilities and internally displaced people with disabilities. A particular focus was made to include women, youth (56%) and older people with disabilities.

Accessible methodology was ensured with the availability of sign language interpreters, illustrators (drawing concepts for participants with specific visual learning styles), simultaneous language interpretation in Arabic, English and Kurdish, support persons, Braille, augmentative printed materials, resting area, design of the conference room, and diverse accessible training materials.

The training was facilitated by 10 facilitators, resource persons, of whom 8 were Bridge Alumni and 09 were Arabic speakers from the MENA Region (including Bridge Alumni from Iraq).



Bridge CRPD-SDGs Iraq Module 1 was funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under the project "Supporting Durable Solutions, Social Cohesion and Reintegration in Iraq", CBM Global and IDA.



Summary of preparatory meetings

- 2 Day, 7 November – Preparatory day of the facilitation team



Two days before the starting of the Bridge CRPD-SDGs Iraq, the facilitation team prepared themselves, reviewed the methodology and adapted it to the national reality.

Furthermore, the team prepared the accessible materials for the training, including the “traffic cards”, Braille material, the “sticky wall” and the inclusive set up of the room.

- 1 Day, 8 November – Preparatory meeting with underrepresented groups

The day before the kick-off of the Module 1, participants from underrepresented groups, their support people, and the facilitation team met together to explain the agenda and the inclusive methodology.



Opening, 9 November

The first day opened with an inspiring message from **Mowaffak Al Khafaji**, on behalf of IADO, stressing the importance of having a Bridge CRPD-SDGs Training Initiative in Iraq, as a result of their advocacy after the Bridge MENA cycle. He also highlighted that this is was the first national Bridge CRPD-SDGs in MENA and that it comes in a strategic moment where the UN agencies were implementing the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). Mowaffak also reminded the audience of the importance of the Article 11 of the CRPD on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies for Iraq and called upon participants to keep that in mind over the week as an issue cutting across the program.



He concluded his remarks by stressing the importance of the Iraq DPOs to be member of AOPD, which is the regional member of IDA and expressing his gratitude to the support provided by IOM and DFAT to make this Bridge CRPD-SDGs training on all human rights for all persons with disabilities a reality in Iraq.

Jahda Abou Khalil, from AOPD also welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of this national Bridge as a keystone to the development of advocates with disabilities in the region. Jahda recalled the work AOPD has been developing with its members, partners and IDA in the region and stressed that this is a real result of this evolving work.

Shivan Salih, from IOM Iraq, shared the importance for IOM Iraq to be supporting this process and their commitment in the country towards persons with disabilities. He recalled the strategic support from DFAT that made this training possible to take place this year.

Tchaurea Fleury, from IDA, recalled that it is the first Bridge CRPD-SDGs supported by a UN agency ever and that it represents a turnpoint in the history of the Initiative. She also stressed the importance of this Bridge cycle that allowed the solid involvement of DPOs from local (from remote areas in Iraq) - passing by national and regional - to global. The experiences and expertise of persons with disabilities from Iraq, from the MENA region and globally were gathered together to support strengthening of the Iraq disability movement.



Post the opening remarks, facilitators worked with participants on articulating their requirements for inclusion, the rules of the training, and on understanding the agenda of the week.

Later, the participants broke into smaller groups for a role play to understand the how different barriers pose challenges towards the empowerment of persons with disabilities.



The day concluded with a feedback session and all participants provided positive reflections.

During days 2 and 3, participants worked on the articles of the CRPD ('two minutes one article') and the principles of the CRPD, discussing the human rights-based approach to disability and the need to look at it from the lens of empowerment, accountability and transparency. The programme of the week highlighted critical issues about situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (Art 11 of the CRPD), particularly the impact of climate change, the refugee crisis and migration.

On days 4 and 5, the group of participants worked on the linkages between the CRPD with the SDGs and the key concepts of the Agenda 2030, as well as the obligations of States parties to the CRPD to implement it (Art 4 of the CRPD).



"Given the barriers many participants from underrepresented groups faced in accessing information, I was concerned that theoretical aspects may be a challenge to present, but during the practical work, I found that all participants had mastered it thanks to the inclusive methods of delivering information that the Bridge methodology uses. The most important result is to get participants asking themselves questions throughout the training so, at the end, they find the responses to their questions. We, as facilitators, succeeded in establishing a balance between theory and practice."

Adnan Ali Fawaz, Facilitator, Jordan



The days 6 and 7 were dedicated to the groups work. Participants were prepared (on day 5) to present key aspects of specific rights in the CRPD. Group of participants worked together to explain key articles of the CRPD using role plays, simulation, drawings, lecture and other inclusive methods. They also demonstrated linkages between those articles and goals of the SDGs.



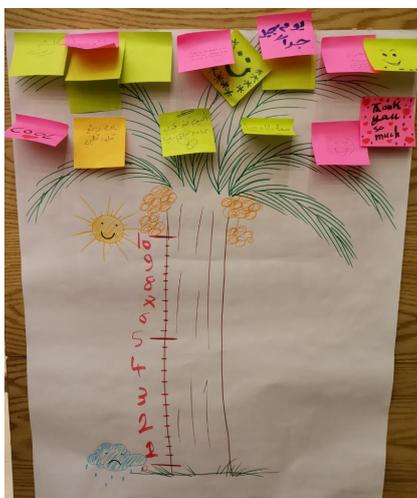
On the day 7, a dedicated hybrid session took place with UN and IDA representatives, both in the room and at their headquarters (New York and Geneva), on the Article 11 of the CRPD on situation of risk and humanitarian emergencies, linking human rights, humanitarian law and development, including regarding refugees and internally displaced people.



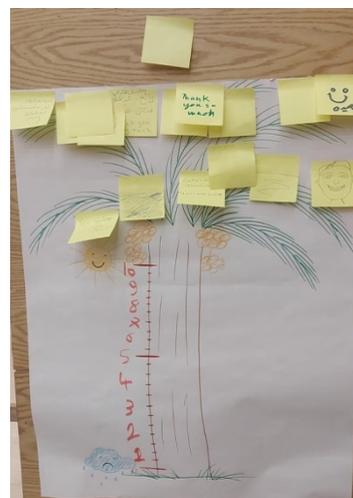
The day 8 concluded with a depth discussion on the importance of a strong and inclusive movement of persons with disabilities in Iraq and in the MENA region and how to prepare for the Bridge CRPD-SDGs Module 2.



The training was highly evaluated by participants as it is demonstrated in the 'Moodometer' below:



Day 7



Day 8



“All the facilitators noticed a big change in the autistic participants and participants with intellectual disabilities during this training. It is the first time that people with intellectual disabilities and short stature participate in trainings about the CRPD in Iraq. They have extremely benefited from this training and the entire group learned from them as well. They were open to others during training, during the working groups, during meals, sharing the table with other participants.”

Hajar Ismail, Facilitator, Iraq



Opportunities

Attention raised in Iraq

“Not only this training brought a great interest from the government and the media - the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Prime Minister heard about this workshop and called the team to greeting them for the achievement. Also, we were having a dinner in the hotel with a senior official from the Government, that was surprised to see a so diverse group of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the training drawn so much attention that we had a special report on DEGLA TV CHANNEL – but it took place in an excellent timing, which just preceded the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.”

Mowaffak Al Khafaj, Resource person, Iraq



Partnerships between Civil Society organizations and the UN system

During the entire week, 13 representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs visited the training in Erbil, interacting with participants and facilitation team, and observing the inclusive methodology and tools used during the Bridge CRPD-SDGs Module 1 in Iraq.

Observers were representatives of (by alphabetical order): DFAT, HI, ICRC, IOM, IRC, UNFPA and UNHCR.



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